

## HERBERT ('HERBIE') CALLOW



Herbie Callow, 81 years of age, is Deddington born and bred and educated in our village school; a senior citizen who has accepted the responsibilities of life, had fulfilment in his work and over the years contributed much to the sporting activities of the village.

He recalls as a lad, and like other youths of his age taking part in the working life of the village: up at 6am to collect and harness horses for work such as on Thursdays and Saturdays for Deely the carrier horses, pay 1s. a week and breakfast, then at night filling coal bags at 2d per night. At that time coal came to Aynho by barge as did the granite and stone chips for the roads.

He spent a short time working at the Banbury Iron workings and in Southern Ireland with vivid memories of the Sinn Finn riots. He later worked for Oxfordshire County Council Road Department and really that was his working life. In the early days the roads were made of slurries in chips and then rolled by steam roller, commenting that the odd banks at the side of roads were due to the stint worker scraping mud off the roads.

During the Second World War he was a member of the Area Rescue Team; the District Surveyor, Mr Rule, was in charge and Mr Morris was in charge of the Home Guard.

Herbie was a ganger on the Oxford by-pass and remembers the Kidlington Zoo and of the time when two wolves escaped. He later became gang foreman concerned with building bridges. One has to realise at that period the small and large streams, culverts and dips, were individually bridged to carry horse and early motor traffic and that many of the bridges had tolls. There was a toll bridge at the bottom of Oxford Hill and Deddington Hill near to the Kissing Gate to Somerton and North Aston. His bridge work took him to the Windrush at Burford. During the week he lived in a van, leaving Deddington at 5.45am Monday morning to cycle the 22 miles, then back to Deddington on the Saturday, leaving at 12 noon. Wages were 1s. an hour, losing wet time and a 48½ hour week. During the summer the grass verges were cut with a hand scythe: the man and his mate had a stretch of seven miles, the same workers maintaining the outlets, culverts and gulleys during the winter.



*Deddington Flower Show 'The Pillow Fight' (Herbie on right)*

When asking what Deddington was like in his early days, with that characteristic hand to his mouth it came tumbling out 'there was always

something going on'. He remembers Deddington's Town Band, his father was a drummer and he was the mascot.

When there was a sexton, the village had a curfew bell which rang at 8pm. The bell would also inform the village of a death by toll: 2x3 tolls on the tenor followed by half an hour of single tolling would indicate a man had died; 3x2 tolls on the tenor followed by half an hour of single tolling would indicate a woman had died and the treble bell would indicate a death of a boy or girl. The tenor bell with the ting tang small bell indicated a fire.

Churchill's Store dominated the Market Square, the various floors carried a multiplicity of goods and the store was renowned for the gable end advertisement 'cheapest house for blankets' and if you look closely enough you can still see the indications of the old lettering. The Smiths followed the Churchills.

Horse drawn vans serviced the surrounding villages and as a boy Herbie remembers a pennyworth of broken biscuits was a real treat.

Reminiscing he mentioned that Len Plumbe's garage was formerly Tibbetts the blacksmiths and he also sold petrol. Hoare's town cowshed was where the British Legion now stands and behind that another blacksmiths, Clark's.

Asked about 'drunken Deddington' he remarked yes, we had a 'few' pubs: in New Street there was the Plough Inn, Crown and Tuns, the Three Horseshoes and the Volunteer, in the Market Square the Unicorn, the Red Lion, the Kings Arms and three doors down the Exhibition.

Married in 1923 and third tenant of his present house, which was one of the first four council houses built in the village, he has one daughter, two sons and four grandchildren – two boys and two girls.



*Herbie's method of transport in his job as Divisional Foreman*

From gang foreman in 1931 he became Divisional Foreman in 1937 and retired in 1966 to spend more time at home with 'Mum', his invalid wife. Herbie was a keen athlete, in his youth taking part in all events especially football, cricket ('a good cricket square was maintained and fenced off at the Castle Grounds'), and the Annual Flower Show. He recalls that boxing was also a popular past time and held at the Red Triangle Club, Mrs Sanders kindly made tea for the Club once a week.

He now obtains great satisfaction working in his garden and deeply appreciates the Meals on Wheels ladies: 'you know the food is always good from Mrs Spiers and her school canteen ladies and in the school holidays we are kindly looked after by the MU ladies'. Herbie is genuine – that's it.

*Bill Marshall*